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PASSIVE RESISTANCE IN ENGLAND AND WALES.

BY THE REV. JOHN CLIFFORD, D.D.

It is difficult to believe that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Englishmen of high character and indisputable loyalty are being sent to prison for exactly the same reasons as those which were urged for committing John Bunyan to Bedford Gaol; for exposing Richard Baxter to the browbeating of Judge Jeffreys and a sentence of eighteen months incarceration; and for sending George Fox to the noisome dungeons of Carlisle and Derby, Lancaster and London. Americans cannot credit it. The Colonists of Canada and Australia say, "Can these things be?"; and even Englishmen would never accept the humiliating conclusion, if they were not confronted with the undeniable fact.

The fact is that nearly one hundred freemen of England, respectable and God-fearing citizens, have been sentenced to different periods of imprisonment since November, 1903. One of the first "criminals" was an old and feeble man who had served in the ministry of the Primitive Methodist Church for nearly forty years. His reputation was without a stain; and he was loved by those who knew him as a saint; but he refused to pay the "Poor Rate," or, more accurately, the rate for the maintenance and up-keep of sectarian schools, and therefore he was sent to prison, "weighed and stripped, put on prison fare, and sent to a plank bed"; and, as he bade farewell to a group of friends who were at the doors of his prison-house, he said, "I hope this will be the last time any man will be imprisoned for conscience' sake."

He was the first, or second, to appear at the gates of the gaol "for conscience' sake," but the "last" is still to appear. His sentence was only for six days; but the spirit of persecution expressed in, and liberated by, the Education Acts could not be content with

so slight a penalty. It asked for more. Hence, a young Christian Endeavorer was committed to gaol for a month because he would not pay four shillings and sixpence; and when Alderman O'Connor appeared on the charge that he withheld half-a-crown, one of the gentlemen authorized to administer justice in the King's name called out, "Give him three months," and told the culprit to "put his conscience in his pocket." More recently, the magisterial Bench at Camberwell "decided to double previous sentences," and ordered a fortnight in gaol for a refusal to pay eightpence. Nor do age and long service of the State make any difference. The Rev. Thomas Champness, one of the most distinguished preachers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and one of the most successful workers in the villages of England, has been sent to Leicester Gaol twice; and, though he is a very old man, the indignities were increased on his second visit. Nearly all the Free Churches have had their representatives in gaol; and arrangements are being made by others (who feel that, after all, they are made to pay, when their goods are taken from them and sold) to rid themselves of all property, so that they may be in a position to pay with their persons.

Imprisonment is only one phase of this advancing cause; another is that of the public sale of the furniture, pictures and books of those who refuse to submit. The first sale was at Wirksworth, in Derbyshire, on June 26th, 1903; and it has been followed by about 1,600 more, in different towns and villages, all over England. Sometimes as many as 150 "lots" have been offered at one auction. Men and women have suffered gladly the spoiling of their goods, knowing that, in the future of English liberty and English education, they had a better inheritance, although the proceedings have often been most costly. Men earning a pound or twenty-five shillings a week have refused ninepence or a shilling or one shilling and threepence, and found themselves mulcted of seventeen shillings or one pound or even thirty shillings, because they would not be parties to the perpetration and perpetuation of what they regarded as a gross injustice. In one extremely flagrant instance, one hundred pounds' worth of goods were taken for the sum of fifteen shillings, and in many cases fidelity to conscience has meant loss of trade and of position. The resisting farmer is refused the renewal of the lease of his farm. The tailor who has become obnoxious by his witness to the

authority of conviction is told that he cannot be trusted to make a clerical coat, unless he will help keep up the clerical school. The gardener is dismissed, though admittedly trustworthy in every way. A recent letter from the south of England says:

"Boycotting goes merrily on. In one village near here, a Resister has lost a customer of ten pounds a year. In another a tradesman has had to put up his shutters for the offence of opening a Gospel hall in a private preserve of the Church. A few more turns of the screw and—one of my friends who has lost Church custom tells me—he will have to do the same. This man declares that, if it does come to that, he will follow the Pilgrim Fathers to a freer land. Another shows me a letter from a clerical customer stating bluntly that he will deal no more with him. 'I prefer a man who minds his own business.' None of the Resisters are men of hot speech. Still, the resistance grows, and grows most in the realms of the 'boycott.'"

At a cost unimaginable by dwellers in the crowded towns the people of the villages have borne their witness, confronted the scorn and opposition of those who knew them best, and whom they had to face day by day, content to suffer so that they might be true. Sieyès said in a dark day, "The title deeds of a man's rights are not lost. They are preserved in his reason." The villagers of England have affirmed the indefeasible rights of the human spirit. The harvests of conscience increase. Each sale is followed by a public meeting of indignant protest, and fuel is added to the white-hot fires of resistance.

Nor does this show the entire range of our agitation. No less than 40,000 summonses have been sent forth by the overseers to compel recalcitrant rate-payers to appear before the magistrates and "show cause" why they will not pay. These summonses are annual in some cases, in others half-yearly, and in others quarterly; clearly, they are sufficiently frequent to keep the movement before the public. But what has aided the cause most, and made its advance independent of organization (though we have a Central Committee in London and over 600 Passive Resistance Leagues in the country), is the action of the magistrates. Some of them, it must be stated first, have been Passive Resisters themselves, and have again and again left the Bench to stand in the dock of the "criminal"; others, though they have remained on the Bench, have expressed their opposition to the Act, their desire for its speedy alteration, and their sympathy with those who

conscientiously refused to pay. Others have resigned their magisterial dignity rather than have anything to do with such offensive statutes. But the majority of the English magistrates are Tories and Anglicans, and they have not sought to administer the law, but, as one of them said, "to make it hot" for Resisters. They have been unfair, menacing, rude, offensive and turbulent. Passion, scorn, pride, bigotry, have occupied the judgment seat. Resisters have been instantly suppressed. Drunkards, wife-beaters, have been accorded the fullest opportunity of explaining their conditions, but Passive Resisters have not been allowed to open their lips. Venerable women of fourscore, with silver hair, and tender voice and saintly mien, known to be foremost in all good works, have failed to win respect. But, as Dean Church said, "The note of failure is on this mode of repression." It suggests a bad case, compels inquiry, elicits sympathy and prepares the mind of the objector for a fresh point of view, and so the harshness of the judge becomes an effective aid to our cause.

The question of the number of the Resisters is, however, entirely inferior to that of their character and position. They are not "pantomime martyrs," as a leading politician suggested, nor "anarchists," of the vivid but biassed imagination of the Primate; nor even fractious Free-Churchmen disguising an attack upon the Anglican Church under the pretext of refusing to pay a sectarian rate! No! as Dr. Forsyth, the Principal of Hackney College, says, "Passive Resisters are not cranks with a passion for martyrdom, but men who are expressing the collective conscience of the Free Churches." Foremost in the ranks are such men as the Rev. F. B. Meyer, President of the National Council of the Free Evangelical Churches of England and Wales, and Dr. Horton, his successor in that important position; the Rev. R. J. Campbell of the City Temple, Dr. Campbell Morgan of Westminster, the Rev. J. H. Jowett of Birmingham, the successor of the late Dr. Dale, and Dr. Robertson Nicoll, the foremost journalist of the day, and editor of the *British Weekly*. But the Resisters belong to all classes and ranks. They are clergymen and ministers, journalists and teachers, manufacturers and magistrates, Members of Parliament and candidates for Parliament, farmers and gardeners, aged women and young men. In fact it is not too much to say that they belong to, and represent, a class which is the strength of our country, whose predecessors "followed the gleam" of truth and

freedom to the New World; who have given cleansing and permanence to its institutions in the past, and are among the best pledges of its future; men in whom loyalty to conscience is a passion and devotion to liberty a religion. Never could a movement more confidently leave itself to be judged as to its motives, its soul and inspiration by the moral and intellectual qualities of those who uphold it than the present Passive Resistance movement in England and Wales.

The prominent features of this singular situation are brought home to us more powerfully by what is taking place in Wales. The space at my disposal does not permit me to describe it; but I may say that the uprising in Wales is national rather than personal; and the fight is being waged by a whole people through their elected county representatives rather than by individuals. The antagonism to the invasion of conscience by Parliament is most resolute, determined and unsubduable. In the election immediately following the promulgation of the Act, the Progressives, who are the opponents of the policy of paying for Church education from the rates, were increased by 187, and their majority in the Counties went up to 482; practically annihilating the party of sectarian education in Wales. Nor was the victory local. It embraced the entire Principality. The Government was hopelessly beaten. In the next Parliament, the Cabinet, goaded by the Bishops, returned to the attack and passed, by entirely unconstitutional methods, a special statute ("The Defaulting Authorities Act") to subsidize sectarian schools from the rates, in spite of the will of the chosen representatives of the people. But it is in vain. Wales resists more fiercely and unitedly than ever. The Government dare not coerce. So they stand over against one another, the people of Wales, and the Tory Government. What will happen this year, no one knows. One party will give in; and, so far as I can see, it will not be Wales.

A question that goes far deeper than any of these points as to the number, character and range of the Passive Resistance agitation concerns the bed-rock of principle on which it rests. What is that? What is the soul of the movement, what the secret of its spontaneous march? How came it into existence?

To answer these inquiries it is necessary to explain one or two of the facts and features of the English system of education. First, it must be remembered that it was not till the year 1870

that our legislation made any really effective provisions for elementary education on a national scale. Prior to that time, the dominant notion subordinated the education of children to the interests of the Church, and treated it as contributory to the influence of the Church. This position had become intolerable in 1870. The ignorance of the people was appalling, and the demand for organization and efficiency strong and clamant. Other countries were advancing in educational equipment. England was being left behind. Something must be done. The task was a difficult one; but it was attempted, and the Government certainly secured a small reform. John Morley said:

"At the same time, it was clearly agreed among the government and the whole of the party at their backs, that at some time or other, near or remote, if public instruction was to be made genuinely effective, the private, voluntary, or denominational system would have to be replaced by a national system. To prepare for this ultimate replacement was one of the points to be most steadily borne in mind, however slowly and tentatively the process might be conducted. Instead of that the authors of the Act deliberately introduced provisions for extending and strengthening the very system which will have eventually to be superseded. They thus by their small reform made a future great reform more difficult of achievement."

That far-sighted statement is abundantly verified. The Act did not proceed on exclusively national principles; but endeavored to propitiate the clerics. It ought to have expelled the churches, as churches, from all state education as the United States of America and our Colonies have done; still, it must not be forgotten that, even that Act provided that the sectarian teaching should be paid for by the denominationalists, and not by citizens, as citizens. Before 1870, schools were recognized as denominational by the Government; the inspectors examined the religious teaching, and the grant was paid for that as much as for anything else. Hence, the Bishops claimed the right to test the inspectors. The inspectors were denominational, and were appointed subject to the recommendation or veto of their respective denominations. But the Act of 1870 changed all this; and our national system of education was made absolutely secular. Mr. Gladstone said on June 24th, 1870:

"We shall take care that under no circumstances shall the public grants be allowed so to operate as entirely to supply, together with

schoolpence, the sum necessary to support those schools, and that there shall always remain a void which must be filled up by free private contributions, and, without which, failing other sources of assistance, those schools would no longer deserve the character of voluntary."

So that the citizens, as citizens, were not to pay for sectarian teaching. But even this admission of the justice of excluding sectarian teaching from public support did not satisfy the Free-Churchmen of 1870. The leaders of that day protested against what seemed to them the perilous conditions under which the principle was to be applied. The support of the sectarian school was to come in part from the citizen and in part from the Churchmen—*i. e.*, to the extent of one-third for teaching the Catechism and Liturgy of the Church of England, and to the extent of two-thirds from fees of parents, endowments and public funds. But the subscriptions of Churchmen have been a diminishing quantity, and the encroachments on the public funds have gone on and on until the sectarian schools have derived from the pockets of the citizens nineteen shillings out of every twenty spent. Nor was this enough. The cry for the rates in addition to the taxes has been going up from the clericals for years. But they were warned by the late Archbishop of Canterbury not to attempt it, for as surely as they succeeded they would lose their control of their sectarian schools. They would be on the "slippery slope," he said, in a characteristic phrase. However, they have taken the plunge, and the Education Acts of 1902 and 1903 are the results.

Those Acts destroyed the School Board system of 1870; and opened the doors for the control of the clerics in what had been thoroughly democratic institutions; they continue and aggravate the wrongs inflicted on the teaching profession (and on the nation) by subjecting its members to ecclesiastical tests, and inflicting an injustice on citizens by making entrance into a department of the Civil Service impossible except by the avowal of particular theological opinions; thus 16,000 head-masterships are closed against all but Anglicans. They deprive women of the right, conferred by the Education Act of 1870, of offering their services for the administration of the education of more than a quarter of a million girls in our cities and of two millions of girls and infants in the country. They place the sectarian schools of Anglicans and Catholics directly on the rates. Every citizen is

forced to contribute to their up-keep; the payment of teachers, of "Nuns," and "Christian Brothers," and Anglican teachers, is derived from the rates and taxes, just as the payment of the police or of the officials of the Borough Councils. Furniture, books, machinery, Prayer-books, crucifixes, images, light, heat are all paid from the rates. Some of those books our money provides charge Free-Churchmen with being "schismatics," "heretics," and the teachers are trained to represent to the children of Free-Churchmen that the churches of their fathers are not "churches of Christ at all"; and that their existence is opposed to the teaching of the Scripture and to the good of the country. The Positivist, Mr. Frederic Harrison, says no more than the literal truth when he asserts that: "No honest mind can refuse to see that the main object, and certainly the sole result, of these Acts was to enable Catholics and Anglicans to triumph over Non-conformists."

Now, it is for that process we cannot and will not pay any rate whatever. We object to many of the provisions of the Education Acts. They are anti-democratic, unfair, unjust; they are destructive of educational efficiency and social peace; but the one thing that has created the Passive Resistance movement is not the destruction of the School Board, not the loss of popular control, but this intrusion into the realm of conscience by the State. That is the prime factor in this situation. To that "we will not submit," declared Dr. Fairbairn to Mr. Balfour when the Bill was before the House. In short, we say with Bunyan to our persecutors, "Where I cannot obey actively, there I am willing to lie down, and to suffer what they shall do unto me." For, as Dr. John Owen says, "Conscience is the territory or dominion of God in man, which He hath so reserved to Himself that no human power can possibly enter into it or dispose it in any wise." That is our case. Conscience must be free. The illuminated conscience must act. Fidelity to conviction is the life of the individual and the security of states. Regard for principle has been the liberation of moral energy and the source of exalted character. It is a religion, a religion of conscience, and it is irresistible. It does not wait the bidding of committees, or change at the mandate of courts, or heed the crack of the whip of Bishops, or truckle to priests. It acts instinctively, spontaneously, and with the swiftness and certainty of a law of nature.

Mr. Lloyd George speaks for England as well as Wales when he says:

"I oppose this Education Act, not because it was passed by a Conservative government, but because it transgresses the essential principles of my conscientious beliefs. Had it been passed by a Liberal ministry, I would have opposed it in the same way. If the Liberal leaders agree to any compromise which continues this injustice, I shall fight them as unflinchingly as we now fight the present government. I will be no party to, will never consent to, any arrangement which will necessitate the application of the civil power of the State to the compulsory herding together of the children of the State under the sectarian teaching of the priest."

The force we are fighting, then, is not primarily political. Parliament is only its tool. It is ecclesiastical. "Clericalism is the enemy." The reversal of the broader and more just educational policy initiated in 1870, and the return to the clericalism of the beginning of the last century is due to the change which has taken place in the Anglican Church, in its ideas and spirit, its temper and aims. It is not the tolerant and inclusive church of the days of Lord Shaftesbury; but the bigoted and persecuting church of the times of Laud and Whitgift. It is a Romanized church; and in and by the English Church Union it is becoming increasingly Romanist. It is that section, the large and dominating section of twentieth-century Anglicanism, that has given us these Acts. It passed seven Resolutions on Education in Convocation: six of them were incorporated in the Bill, adopted by the Cabinet, and passed by a majority that was returned solely to end the South-African War. It is the victory of the High Church party; many of the Low-Churchmen are against it, and the Broad Church party would never have introduced it, as is evident from the sturdy resistance of the Bishop of Hereford.

No! it is the offspring of the Roman theory, and another illustration of the truth of the words of Mr. Gladstone: "Individual servitude, however abject, will not satisfy the party now dominant in the Latin Church. The State must also be a slave." In fact, this fight is a battle of principles that, like fire and water, are in eternal collision. It is no war of this Church and that, of Bishop and priest with minister and deacon, of Churchmen and Dissenters. The real conflict is between ideas and the systems they create for their embodiment. On both sides, the men are honest and sincere, true and devoted; but the collision is far deeper than

the men, though the warfare proceeds through the men, and by the men; they are but the visible garniture of the ideas. The collision is in the constitutive and regulative ideas of the English Church on the one side, and the structural forces and conditions of developing English life on the other. Regal ideas—ideas that mould the character and fix the action of man, as an individual, and as a citizen, and as a Churchman, challenge each other to combat; they have done so through the long course of our educational experiments and compromises, traditions and customs, failures and successes, and they repeat the challenge with fiercest intensity just now. They consist of (1) deeply opposed interpretations of religion; what it is and how it is mediated to the souls of men; (2) different conceptions of education; where it begins, whether in the administration of a rite or in the gentle uplift of the spirit of the child on the wings of human love and character towards truth and goodness; and how it is advanced, whether by the machinery of dogma or by quickening to self-activity: (3) contrary and contradictory ideas of Christian ministry, whether it is priestly, intolerant and exclusive, or catholic and free: and, (4) dominating all, totally opposed notions of the functions and province of the State in relation to religious societies, whether Parliament ought, or ought not, to take in hand the teaching of theological creeds, or the patronage, control and financial support of one such society, or of several, or of all. These are the forces in conflict; and on these matters, the English Church has been, and is, at war, not with the Free Churches merely, but with the mass of the English people outside all churches, and with the Colonies of our great Empire, and also with the advancing life of the world.

The path of duty is clear and plain; we must offer a patient and invincible antagonism to these statutes; we can do no other. We seek the total separation of churches, as churches, and clerics, as clerics, from all State education, elementary, secondary and university. The functions of Church and State must be kept apart, in control, in cost and in every way. Let the churches do their own work at their own cost and as they will: and the citizens do theirs in their way and at their cost and without the interference of the Churches. That is the one and only way to educational efficiency, social harmony and national progress.

JOHN CLIFFORD.